



RURAL BROADBAND EXPANSION COUNCIL

Minutes of Regular Meeting

10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 17, 2021

1. Welcome / Call to Order / Establish a Quorum

- Sen. Leewright called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m., reminded all that the meeting is being recorded, and ordered the roll to be called.
- Present: Cliff Agee, Mike Berube, Drew Beverage, Darlene Brugnoli, Steven Harpe, James Leewright, Logan Phillips, Daniel Webster, Brian Whitacre, and Brandy Wreath.
- Absent: Mike Fina, Patrick Grace, Roger Neal, Billy Staggs, and Jerry Whisenhunt.
- Chair declared that a quorum of the Council was present.

2. * Approval of Minutes of the October 20 meeting

- **Motion #1** by Mr. Beverage to approve the minutes as presented; Dr. Whitacre seconds. Motion adopted without objection.

3. Remarks from Co-Chair Sen. James Leewright

- Reminder to all that the meeting is being recorded.
- For today's meeting, we have audio (but not video) for those joining us online. The cameras are being used for the special session of the Legislature.

4. Remarks from Co-Chair Rep. Logan Phillips

- The public-facing broadband map for Oklahoma is now online on the ORBEC web page of the Commerce website, <https://www.okcommerce.gov/about-us/rural-broadband-expansion-council/>.
- This week, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) passed and was signed into law by the President, making even more federal funds available for broadband infrastructure. We will have more information about that soon.

5. Presentation on broadband workforce by Mr. Jaared Scott, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer at Francis Tuttle Technology Center (20 minutes)

- [Slide deck posted on ORBEC web page.]
- Oklahoma has a strong CareerTech system with 29 districts, 59 campuses, and more than 90 instructional areas. The system's customers are students and employers. CareerTech has a variety of programs and curricula related to broadband. They also offer customized training for employers. Nationally, no standardized training specific for broadband technicians. Could be developed with employers. Promote these jobs opportunities to students and parents.
- Leewright: Building out Oklahoma's broadband infrastructure will encounter supply chain issues, including the availability of skilled workers. I invite members to detail private sector needs for workforce training related to broadband.
- Agee: Locating; fiber splicing; test set operation; tower & pole climbing; RF engineering.
- Leewright: Timeframe to gear up such training?

- Scott: Meet with employers to identify skill sets; build curriculum; find qualified instructor; offer and deliver classes in a flexible manner.
- Harpe: How can we grow Planning & Project Management skill sets. Rotational engineers.
- Scott: Short-term project management training offered. Finding the right instructors is the key factor in how quickly we can begin training.
- Harpe: How can we, with our contacts in the private sector, help you find these instructors?
- Scott: CareerTech can meet with employers to identify them.
- Whisenhunt: Skills needed: splicing, installations, maintenance.
- Scott: We have the foundational tools; we just need to add the additional components to meet specific employer needs.

6. Report of the GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES sub-committee by Mr. Brandy Wreath (5 minutes)

- We have been looking into the broadband service and speed data to better understand its dependability and limitations.
- We saw a presentation by a local vendor on data mapping.
- Next month, we will recommend additional data overlays for the broadband map to assist with decision-making.

7. * Discussion and possible action on recommendations of the Geographic Boundaries sub-committee (5 minutes)

- None.

8. Report of the ADOPTION RATE sub-committee by Dr. Brian Whitacre (5 minutes)

- Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) update. Oklahoma slipped from #5 to #6 in percentage of eligible households adopting. 125,000 households.
- The IIJA extends and renames the EBB to the Affordable Connectivity Program. The monthly household benefit is reduced from \$50 to \$30, the remains \$75 in tribal areas. The funding for this program should last 8-10 years.
- The IIJA helps us establish a State Digital Equity Office (SDEO). About \$300 million per year will be available in grants nationally to these offices. The Council should discuss who should be in Oklahoma's SDEO.
- Digital Navigator Program has been rolled out in five rural libraries. Early successes. Would like to see this continue after pilot program through the SDEO.

9. * Discussion and possible action on recommendations of the Adoption Rate sub-committee (5 minutes)

- Phillips: Do you have any materials?
- Whitacre: Yes, a one-pager. The Oklahoma Library Association has also promoted.
- Leewright: Add this information to ORBEC website, too.
- Phillips: Is the \$300 million nationwide?
- Whitacre: Oklahoma will get a set amount and can compete for still more.

10. Report of the POLICY IMPACTS sub-committee by Ms. Darlene Brugnoli (10 minutes)

- Annual Report draft for 2020. Thank you to Brad Wolgamott and House staff. Will share with the sub-committee chairs, then the Council co-chairs to share with full Council to review for adoption at the next Council meeting.
- We are drafting a lengthier report for 2021.
- The Grant Rules sub-committee chair asked us and Mike Fina to propose policy principles for grants. Great feedback. Will review, then present to Representative Phillips.
- There has been discussion regarding the need for a Broadband Coordinator's office to receive funds, decide how to allocate funds, etc. This is an issue for legislators to decide.

11. * Discussion and possible action on recommendations of the Policy Impacts sub-committee (5 minutes)

- Phillips: Grant Rules sub-committee had the same recommendation to create a Broadband Coordinator's office. ARPA allows us to use up to 5% to support such an office.
- Whitacre: Highly supportive. Can use ARPA funds to support. Research indicates it approves rural broadband availability.
- Harpe: Under ARPA, the State Chief Operating Officer's office, working with the Legislature, has set up a State Grant office and engaged Guidehouse. Consider pooling ARPA & IIJA dollars for broadband. Amanda Rodriguez, CFO at OMES is responsible for managing the office. Consider maybe not having 2 offices.
- Whisenhunt: I support the idea of having a Broadband Coordinator.
- Leewright: Considering a Broadband Office, not just a coordinator.
- Phillips: Reporting process, going on for years.
- **Motion #2** by Leewright moved to create a Broadband Coordinator's Office & recommend the same to the ARPA committee; Harpe seconds. Motion adopted unanimously.

12. Report of the ADVISORY sub-committee by Director Steven Harpe (5 minutes)

- At the request of Director Harpe, the chair recognized Mr. Jerry Moore, Chief Information Officer for the Office of Management and Enterprise Services, to speak.
- Moore: Got an update on the state's broadband maps and the historical practices for generating and updating them. Continuing discussions with other state agencies – Transportation, Commerce, Turnpike Authority, and OneNet – on opportunities to improve the state's maps to serve dual purposes – state's network and rural broadband. Expect to have recommendations in coming months.

13. * Discussion and possible action on recommendations of the Advisory sub-committee (5 minutes)

- None.

14. Report of the GRANT RULES sub-committee by Representative Logan Phillips (5 minutes)

- Met twice. Partnered with Policy sub-committee. Mike Fina created a workgroup will bring forth principles for grants and funding.

15. * Discussion and possible action on recommendations of the Grant Rules sub-committee (10 minutes)

- Whitacre: Has the Grant Rules sub-committee considered distinguishing between the ARPA & IIJA funds? Will there be a single set of rules for both?

- Phillips: We are following the guidance of the Project Management Office (PMO), Guidehouse and 929 Strategies. We will learn more about IJA from the PMO.

16. Discussion of possible agenda items for next meeting

- Harpe: Invite Amanda Rodriguez, CFO of OMES, to explain how the PMO is working with the Legislature and Governor's Office, as a possible template for the Broadband Coordinator's Office.
- Leewright: Recommend beginning to develop a funding proposal regarding the Broadband Coordinator's Office to submit through the grant proposal portal in coordination with Amanda Rodriguez.
- Wreath: Placeholder for discussing potential map overlays; will coordinate with Commerce.
- Leewright: Cancel the Council's December meeting; resume in January.

17. Announcements

- No meeting in December. Next regularly scheduled meeting: **10:00 a.m.**, Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, in **Room 4S.5**, State Capitol. [Members must attend in-person in order to count toward quorum, speak, and vote.]

18. Adjournment

- Sen. Leewright / Rep. Phillips adjourned the meeting at 10:42 a.m.

* Indicates anticipated action.

Prepared by: Kirk Martin, Oklahoma Department of Commerce
Approved by Council, as presented, on 01/19/2022.

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